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'Star wars' tops the hit list of Soviet propaganda czars

By Bill Gertz and Tom Diaz
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The Soviet Union's top priority this year is blocking the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, according to experts on Soviet disinformation and active measures campaigns.

Roy Godson, editor of an annual forecast on Soviet propaganda activities, said, "1987 to them is a goal-line stand, particularly on the subject of American strategic defense."

"They do not want to see an American commitment to deployment of strategic defense," he said.

Mr. Godson and former KGB intelligence officer Stanislav Levchenko discussed the Soviet Union's likely agenda for 1987 at a luncheon Friday. The annual forecast is contained in the latest edition of the quarterly newsletter, Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation Forecast.

According to its sponsors, the forecast accurately predicted most of the Soviet Union's major themes last year.

Other major objectives the Soviets will pursue through active measures and disinformation in 1987 are the restoration of detente and the growth of Soviet influence in Asia at the expense of U.S. power in the region, the report predicts.

Active measures and disinformation activities employed by the Soviet Union go beyond ordinary propaganda, experts say, and include widespread use of front groups, forgeries, smear campaigns, and the use of influential organizations and persons in the Western democracies — many of whom are unaware that they are being manipulated covertly.

A major theme of such measures, the report says, will be a supposed new "openness" in Soviet society under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and the idea that Mr. Gorbachev needs the support of "moderates" in the West on such matters as arms control and stopping SDI in order to overcome resistance from "hard-liners" who oppose his more liberal policies in the Soviet Union.

The idea the Soviets wish to convey is that "Soviet leaders... are too busy with reform and overcoming bureaucratic resistance to engage in adventurist foreign policy," the report says.

In fact, a delegation of top Soviet officials began a two-week tour of the United States Friday to promote, in grass-roots meetings throughout the country, Mr. Gorbachev's announced reforms.

The report stresses that "Moscow's major concern in 1987 is that U.S. and European talk about strategic defenses will turn to serious action and become a real part of United States national security policy."

To keep that from happening, the report warns, the Soviets have deployed worldwide resources.

"In the United States, Moscow's principal target is likely to be Congress," it says. "A veritable army of permanent and visiting Soviet officials will be dispatched to Capitol Hill."

A key objective of those officials will be to exploit "the contradiction between the attachment of many in the Congress and the administration to arms control and the public popularity of SDI," the report says. They will seek to block any changes to or withdrawal from the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Religious and professional organizations in the United States also will be targeted, either for visits from their "counterparts," or for invitations to visit the Soviet Union.

"Moscow is well aware that once organizations or individuals become involved in 'bridge-building'... it becomes much more difficult to criticize the Soviet bloc, at least publicly," the report says, partly because

many people think it rude to criticize their hosts, and partly because of the implicit threat of losing visa privileges.

Mr. Levchenko, a covert operative who defected in 1979, illustrated by one example how subtle Soviet operations can be.

He said Soviet officials freed dissident Nobel laureate Andrei Sakharov from exile in order to "neutralize" his appeal to the West. Mr. Sakharov, a physicist, was also returned to Moscow with Soviet officials' knowledge that Mr. Sakharov opposes SDI and therefore could be exploited to promote the Soviet anti-SDI propaganda effort, Mr. Levchenko said.

"The more Sakharov is available to foreign media, without suffering, without being martyred as the symbol of Soviet dissent, the sooner he will be neutralized," Mr. Levchenko said. "It's a very devious and immoral trick."

The two experts' remarks were made Friday at a luncheon meeting with reporters coinciding with the release of a new issue of the quarterly newsletter. Mr. Godson edits the newsletter and Mr. Levchenko serves on the publication's editorial advisory board.

Mr. Levchenko worked with the Kremlin's International Information Department as a KGB specialist in covert propaganda.

SOVIET DISINFORMATION: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The following are key events that the Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation Forecast suggests monitoring in 1987:

■ **U.N. Year of Shelter for the Homeless** – "Moscow will try to divert attention from human rights issues in the Soviet Union by focusing on poverty, homelessness and unemployment in the West."

■ **March** – Delegation from Soviet Peace Committee visits United States. First of six scheduled televised exchanges between U.S. Congress and Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union.

■ **April** – Soviet religious leaders to visit United States, will stress "halting the arms races and especially in the heavens." First anniversary of Chernobyl accident will be used to stress danger of nuclear technology and "candid" Soviet handling of incident.

■ **May** – Soviets will use 15th anniversary of 1972 ABM Treaty as springboard to push "narrow" interpretation of the treaty to hamper Strategic Defense Initiative testing and deployment. Soviet Committee on Science and Technology visits U.S. businessmen.

■ **June** – World Women's Congress in Moscow will stress "Soviet peace proposals and national liberation struggles."

■ **August** – Hiroshima and Nagasaki Days may be marked by presentation of so-called "People's Peace Treaty" at the United Nations. Fortieth anniversary of India's independence will inspire disinformation about U.S. efforts to destabilize India.

■ **September** – Fifth anniversary of KAL 007 downing – Soviets will claim again it was on spy mission. Elections in New Zealand will occasion more attacks on U.S. nuclear power and claims it is "bullying" allies.

■ **October** – Thirtieth anniversary of Sputnik – "Soviets will hail their 'star peace' exploration of space in contrast to U.S. 'star wars' program" – even though Soviets have massive "star wars" program of their own.

■ **November** – Seventieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution will be a "major propaganda spectacle," with Soviets portraying themselves as a "powerful, peace-loving society, which has made mistakes but is now evolving into a more humane system."